/79 cont./

193 The simple result is that all kinds of things that do not belong to it are regarded as part of the stem, and the form is used on all kinds of occasions where it is appropriate neither according to person, time sequence, or other nuances contained in it. The organic structure of words becomes rigid, and the sentence becomes a mosaic of the crudest sort made up of nothing but fragments. But there is provision for understanding; for the Indian, with his talent for the characteristic, the chopped-off fragment of a word suffices completely for the entire sentence, and, what is worse, if one wants to make progress in the language, it is all the more agreeable, of course, if one needs only the clumsy content of the communication; he himself soon adopts the new manner of expression: fluent conversations are carried on by barter with stamped coins instead with living words.

126 What made my recording not a little difficult was the cir-
192 cumstance that the Bakaïrí did not understand my questioning tone.
[194] They imitated it instead of answering. Obtaining the names of
[153] the objects present was done without any trouble; they even anticipated the need, pointed to those I had not yet asked about,
126 and said the names. I went into great detail with the parts of the
193 body because they are always joined with pronominal prefixes; thus the Indian does not say, for example, "tongue," but always, with the addition of the person, "my tongue," "your tongue," "his tongue," and thus there is a grammatical value in this category of the list. It was therefore well to note whether the part of the body whose stem one was asking for was shown on oneself, on the person questioned, or on a third person, for the answer was accordingly: your ålu, my ulu, his ilu, or in general kχulu, the tongue of all of us here.

126 Recording animal names was a pleasure, for here the imita-
192 tion with sounds and gestures was the most artful. A snake, an
536 alligator head, or the like was also drawn in the sand. The
825 quantity of the many individual statements was a hindrance to me, since I did not know enough about the voices and the behavior of their animals; they offered me subleties in the distinction of species which, to their surprise, I was unable to appreciate, and

/79 cont./

126 192 536 825 sometimes I am afraid I betrayed what to them were incredible gaps in the most ordinary education.

The most difficult problem lay in the verbs, and, to be sure, not only because of the complication of forms. If I succeeded in writing down short sentences in which something was said about an occurrence that was just going on, even if I myself performed all kinds of actions, such as eating and drinking now of this, now of that, which were supposed to give them the content of a sentence, /80/ gross errors were nevertheless unavoidable. Unfortunately, they often said things that were different from what they were supposed to say according to my request and criticized the action instead of naming it. They were thinking for them selves and not for me. And in these efforts their readiness to imitate was disturbing to a high degree. I thought nothing would be easier than to obtain at least those intransitive verbs that could be evoked by unequivocal mimicry on my part; I would indeed need only to sneeze, cough, weep, yawn, snore, only to get up, sit down, to fall, and so forth, in order to be immediately rewarded with the matching words. But they either clung to the contemplation of the process itself, thought I wanted to go away when I stood up, righteously joined in when I yawned, because they, too, were tired, or were royally amused at my strange doings, and, amidst much laughter, would likewise abandon themselves to sneezing, coughing, and snoring, without, however, saying the redeeming words.

126 192 153

I made the best progress when I gave them the Portuguese word and applied the formula: the Karaibe says it thus, how does the Bakaïrí say it? Here I finally almost always met with understanding and response, for they were mad about learning my language.

[811] They were very grieved that they did not understand me better, and, confusing hearing and understanding, they asked me to cure them. I had to put saliva on my fingers and with it rub the auditory entrance for them. Their comprehension of Portuguese was even more deficient than they themselves realized. They have

151 191 194

/80 cont./

151 no f in their store of sounds and replace it with p: if I said fogo
191 (fire), fumo (tobacco), they would say pogo, pumo. But they
194 heard, or, more correctly, apperceived, the f also as p; they were, as far as I could see, firmly convinced that they were pronouncing the same sound that I had said to them. Their attitude was entirely different if, for example, I gave them too long a word; then they struggled and despaired of it, but with regard to fogo, fumo, f...., the more emphatically and loudly I said it, the more emphatically and loudly they joined in: pogo, pumo, p...., with decided indigantion over my dissatisfaction.

128 I was obliged to be content with completing the vocabulary as much as possible and interpreting the sentences to the best of my knowledge. I did not achieve an actual translation that would do justice to the subtleties of their language; whatever I was able to offer in this respect in my book Die Bakaïrí-Sprache /The Bakaïrí Language/ (Leipzig, K. F. Köhler, 1892), I owe
192 to Antonio. I was especially very peculiarly touched by their joy over the richness of their stock of words. They manifested great pleasure at having a word for every object, as though the name itself were a sort of thing and piece of property. That the number of concepts depends primarily on interest was clearly evident. On the one hand, in comparison with our languages, an abundance of words, such as animal names or kinship terms; on the other hand, a poverty at first surprising: yélo is "lightning" and "thunder"; kχópö, rain, /81/ thunderstorm, and cloud. Now of course, almost all rains in their region are associated with thunderstorm phenomena, and the cloud in the sky has interest for them only insofar as it means an approaching thunderstorm. The fact that, when they combine into one concept, in their word yélo, the visual and audible aspect of the electrical discharge, thunder is the more essential part is shown by the fact that they also call the buzzing whizzer-stick yélo; I, who proceeded from the idea of the magic instrument, according to the custom of mythologists, who was looking for the uncanny and recognized this primarily in the flashing streak, at first translated the word as "lightning" instead of "thunder."

/223 cont./

121 114 with slight variations, it is nevertheless more than a mere summary, for at several points our opinions differ, while at others heretofore unknown facts appear for the first time. This concerning the linguistic part, the subject of this first chapter. The divergence is even greater in the points that follow, which are based exclusively on what Irineu related.

/224/ I

The Language of the Bacaeris

197

[133] [103] The language of the Bacaeris (kxura itano, tohi itano, that is, language of people, exactly like abá ñeẽ, the language of the Tupis) is spoken on the Rio Novo (Yemeriri), a tributary of the Arinos; on the Paranatinga (Pakunéra), a tributary of the Tapajoz; on the Tamitatoala, one of the headwaters of the Xingú, called Batovi by the Germans in honor of the baron of the same name, president of Mato Grosso in 1884, the time of the first expedition; on the Culisewi, a tributary of the Culuene, also a headwater (the easternmost one) of the Xingú. On the Oronuro, the westernmost headwater, there are no Indians who speak this language. From an examination of the vocabularies and the grammatical forms, it was proved that the Bacaeris belong to the Carahiba or Cariba group.

• 194 Of the letters of our alphabet, F is found in only one word, possibly onomatopoeic, which precedes incantations: aúfá, perhaps an imitation of the blowing out of smoke. V is rare, and in any case it is not pronounced as it generally is in Rio de Janeiro, but rather seems to be bilabial. R is always soft, that is, to use the description by Gonçalves Vianna, "the air is expelled at one time, without interruption, as in caro /'dear' in Port./, and not intermittently, in successive contacts, more or less repeated, /225/ resulting from the vibration imparted by the active organ, as in carro /'cart' in Port./." G is slightly velar, and to differentiate it from ours

/225 cont./

194 the Greek y is used; it is always hard, as in gato /"cat" in Port./ and guerra /"war" in Port./. J is more like the English sound dj. X is always the French and our ch. German sch, English sh. Ç is preferred to S in order to avoid confusion. For the hard sound, K is substituted for C as well as Qu. H is always aspirated. Y and W are always used as semivowels. Ñ is our nh.

Sounds in no way similar to ours are the following:

λ, difficult to pronounce, and which perhaps only those who learned it as children can render satisfactorily: "I cannot define it any better than by saying that it stands between ri, ro, ru, on the one hand, and gl, on the other," writes Steinen (Bak. Spr., 255). Irineu utters it by raising his folded tongue to the upper teeth and then, or simultaneously, withdrawing it, or raising it, to the soft palate; it is thus a velar supradental. It appears only at the end of words, preceded by a which it lengthens considerably.

Kx is more velar than K.

x is velar and corresponds to the Spanish j.

ŋ, which Dr. Steinen regards as a special nasal, is our final m or n, preceded by a short i, like tambem as pronounced in Rio de Janeiro.

The vowels are the same as ours, pure or nasalized.

In addition there is ȧ, that is, a sound midway between open A and O, as in English "call," "all"; â, midway between á and ö; ō, corresponding to the German equivalent, or the French eu; /226/ ü, equivalent to the German and French u, but closer to i than to either of these.

The syllables consist either of a simple vowel or of consonants and a vowel.

Words end only in vowels, or in λ or ŋ. The final vowels are sometimes difficult to grasp because of their impurity, and it is necessary to resort to certain suffices, such as γe, lō, mo, ba, in order to define them.

/226 cont./

194 There are no words beginning with b, except for bakaéri, or d, or ɣ, or ɣ, or l, or r; two words given by Steinen with initial r are rendered more correctly: arapadura, Oronuro.

Initial p, m, t, k, kw, when transferred to the middle by the addition of prefixes and even of independent words, are transformed respectively into w, d, y. In the middle of words there is a frequent change of p to b, t to d, m to w, with nasalization of the preceding vowel; of y to ñ, l to r, r to n, ç to h.

The accent is put on the penult, except when the last syllable ends in λ or ŋ, in which case the accent passes to it. The accent is also shifted when two words run together through elision: e.g., bakaéri, accent on the penult, on the é; bakaer'idamu, accent on the káe, as though spelled bakáeridámu.

There are no diphthongs, properly speaking, but vowels may be compressed together in such a way as to produce the impression of diphthongs.

128 Now that the reader knows more or less how to read Kɯra-itano, he may practice on the following text, /227/ which is accompanied by an interlinear translation; it will serve as the basis for a brief grammatical outline, and it is unpublished, like all those that we shall present.